

W

M492r
1837

Medical Society of New Haven
County

A REPORT

OF THE

NEW HAVEN COUNTY

MEDICAL SOCIETY,

ON THE

EXPEDIENCY OF REPEALING THAT SECTION

OF THE

MEDICAL LAWS

OF THIS STATE,

WHICH EXCLUDES IRREGULAR PRACTITIONERS FROM THE

BENEFITS OF LAW IN THE COLLECTION OF FEES.

John Gandy's Library
LIBRARY
M 29835
Washington, D.C.

NEW HAVEN:

PRINTED BY B. L. HAMLEN.

1837.

W
M492r
1837

Film 2073 #4

THE General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, at their session in May, 1836, received petitions from various parts of the State, praying for a repeal of the 8th section of the "act to incorporate the Connecticut Medical Society." By a vote of the General Assembly, these petitions were postponed to the next session of the Assembly, with an order for a citation to the Medical Society. In consequence of this citation, the Medical Society of New Haven County, at their annual meeting in April, 1837, adopted the following Report, as expressive of their views in regard to the expediency of the proposed measure.

REPORT.

THE Medical Laws in this State were enacted for a two-fold purpose. First, that our state might be furnished with an able and faithful medical faculty; and secondly, that the public might, as far as possible, be secured from medical imposture and the evils which flow from it. In pursuing these objects, the public good, rather than the benefit of a profession, was the end and aim. With the design of promoting these views, the following act has been admitted to a place in our statute-book. It is part of an act entitled "An Act in relation to the Medical Institution of Yale College."

"Every medical student, shall be required to attend to the study of physic and surgery, for two years, with some medical or surgical professor or practitioner, who is in respectable standing, *Provided*, he shall have been graduated at some college; otherwise to study three years; to have acquired in addition to a good English education, a competent knowledge of the Latin language, and of the principles of Natural Philosophy; to have arrived at the age of twenty one years; to be of a good moral character; and to deliver to the committee of examination a satisfactory dissertation upon some subject in medicine or surgery, or the auxiliary branches. And every medical student shall attend one course of the lectures under the professors of the Medical Institution of Yale College, or of some other public medical institution, previously to his being admitted to an examination for a license."

In furtherance of these same views, the following provision, contained in an act entitled "An Act to incorporate the Connecticut Medical Society," has been made. "No physician or surgeon, who shall have commenced practice since the year one thousand eight hundred, or who shall hereafter commence practice, shall be entitled by law to recover any debt or fees for such practice, unless he shall have been duly licensed by some medical society, or college of physicians, and all persons licensed to practice physic and surgery, and practicing within this state, shall of course be members of the Medical Society."

That portion of an act last quoted is the "8th section," which it is proposed to repeal. It will be observed that it has (and was designed to have) the force and effect of a penalty for not complying with the conditions contained in that other act which, in these pages, precedes it. Without it, the law which makes a course of study necessary to the practitioner of physic is, of course, inoperative *as a law*; for a law which may be violated with impunity, is a law without a penalty, or more properly, no law at all.

It surely will be conceded that the public have a real interest in the character and qualifications of medical men—the acknowledged guardians of life and health. Their near relation to the very sources of happiness and well-being has induced the civilized governments of every age and country to make regulations and adopt measures calculated to render them the more worthy the high trust confided to them.

That a successful practitioner of physic must be well acquainted with the principles of his art; that these principles are not to be learned in a day; and that the prescribed course of medical study in this state is not unnecessarily long, are truths which, in other circumstances, we might feel ashamed to argue. These truths we should ordinarily deem it necessary but to state; but the attempts which are now making to conceal or forget them, render it necessary, or at least, *proper*, that we cite *proof*.

There is not, within the range of our knowledge, a more complicated piece of mechanism than the human system. Taken in the number of its parts, and the variety and intricacy of its laws, it is without an equal. A perfect knowledge of its construction and composition as a *simple machine* is the work of years; and this knowledge does not require a tithe of the study necessary to comprehend it fully as a *living system*. It is upon this system that the physician is obliged to operate. It is his business to understand its powers, to perceive the nature and seat of its disorders, and on proper occasions, to speed, to check, to modify, or in some way to correct its movements. Surely, then, two or three years is a period short enough in which to lay in a competent store of the knowledge in question. It is agreed that he who would put in order even the simplest mechanical contrivance, must inform himself regarding its construction. An old wooden clock that needs repair is not put into the hands of a man who never saw the interior of a clock; or if placed in such hands, the owner expects it will be spoiled. He who would prescribe successfully for a disordered time-keeper, must acquaint himself with the number and relation of its parts, and the mechanical forces which originate and regulate its motion; or, in other words, he must study its *anatomy* and *physiology*. And is a man fitted for the office of superintending, regulating and repairing the human machine—of prescribing correctly for its multiplied disorders, who knows nothing of its parts, powers and operations—nothing of its anatomy and physiology? and would it not be well to require of him who takes upon himself this office, at least, that amount of knowledge regarding his business which we are accustomed to demand of our ordinary mechanics? Undoubtedly, it is as difficult and intricate a piece of work to patch up a broken constitution as a leaky pair of boots—to keep a-going a rickety human system as a rickety time-piece; while the consequences of blundering and bungling workmanship are even more momentous.

But a knowledge of anatomy and physiology merely, is not all that is required of the physician. Besides being acquainted with disease in all its various and ever varying forms, he must know the means best adapted to cure it. Disease is to be removed by the application of certain agents or instruments which have power to modify the functions, to rouse or diminish vital energy, to correct disordered movements, and to restore the lost balance of the system. These agents are to the physician what tools are to the mechanic. They have multiplied powers, and multiplied and varying relations to our organs, which it is no easy matter to learn. To understand their nature fully, the purposes to which they may be applied, and the effects which they are calculated to produce, in all the different forms of disease, and under the different circumstances of constitution, age, sex, season, climate, &c. is a task sufficient for the acutest mind and the most persevering industry.

It cannot with reason be disputed, then, that medicine, in order to be understood, must be *studied*. Medical skill can be the result of nothing else than severe and protracted application. It is not a thing that men are born with, or purchase of strolling Indians and seventh sons, or learn by dreaming, or even discover by meditation, any more than shoe-making or ship-making. There is neither magic or witchcraft about it. It cannot be acquired without some expense both of time and money, and without, at least, a common share of understanding. The lazy and the lounging, as well as the weak and the ignorant, can never possess it. That which comes without industry is pretension, and makes up in hustling and boasting what it lacks of something better.

But perhaps what we have said on this point is better than more. Those who look upon study and application as, of course, indispensable to true medical skill, will perhaps regard what has been offered as mere trifling, and unworthy even the little space which has been allotted it; while such as consider our art as nothing better than a sort of *knack* which certain men and women get by inheritance, or as a kind of juggling akin to fire-eating and best exercised by mountebanks and vagabonds, will hardly be convinced by any thing in the shape of *argument*.

But though it be admitted that medicine is based on science, is a comprehensive and difficult study, and has a most important bearing on the interests of the community, it may still be said that there are not sufficient reasons for legislative provisions and restrictions regarding its practice. To justify legislation in this matter, it will be necessary to show that the highest general good, or in other words the interest and safety of the public, requires it. This we are prepared to do.

The ease with which imposition in the healing art is practiced affords one powerful reason why legislators should attempt something for the public security. In consequence of the peculiar opportunities and facilities for imposture in our profession, the practice of it

holds out great temptations to the idle, the artful, the unprincipled, and the thousands who hate any honest vocation. Hence comes charlatanism in all its extent and variety, from Mr. Swaim and the great nostrum-monger in New York, down to the obscurest root-doctor who strolls about from village to village. We had the curiosity lately to inquire into the proportion of the advertising columns of the several daily newspapers of the city of New York, which was taken up with the advertisements of quack medicines. We found this proportion to be, in the penny papers, at least, one half, and in the larger papers, somewhat less than that.

The reason that imposition is so easy and successful in medicine, is to be found in the general want of information regarding the nature of disease, the operation of remedies, and the powers of the human system. As a consequence, the skill and knowledge of a physician must, for the most part, be taken upon trust, except so far as evidence is to be obtained from his general character and acquirements. There is no subject which, by the mass of mankind, is so rarely made a matter of general study and investigation, even in its elements, as medical science; while, at the same time, there is no subject regarding which men so universally consider themselves adequately informed, in all its practical applications, as this same medical science. This want of knowledge, unfortunately not felt as a *want*, we deplore, because worth in our profession is, as a consequence, imperfectly appreciated, and because ignorance and impudence thereby gain an advantage of the utmost importance. It is well known, that the arts of intrigue, and the no less potent art of puffing, will oftentimes procure occupation and a name, when unpretending merit is left to perish unnoticed. This fact is well illustrated by the sudden and full employment frequently obtained by itinerants and adventurers without character or merit, and of whose vaunted skill and cures we know nothing, except what is to be found in a pompous advertisement or handbill.

The intense anxiety and apprehension of the sick and their friends, and the eagerness with which they grasp at the promise of relief, from however questionable a source it may come, give the arts of empiricism a ten fold efficiency, and villainy an advantage it would not otherwise possess. The powerful manner in which the fear of death operates upon the discerning and judging faculty, particularly when the mind is enfeebled by sickness, can never be fully understood by those who have not often witnessed its effect. Under these circumstances, the understanding is, as it were, gone, and man is the creature of impulse and feeling. He is wavering, credulous and superstitious. He is perhaps ready to bestow confidence on the most worthless objects; to repose faith in the most trifling, ridiculous and hazardous means, *provided* his humor and hopes are encouraged. We have often witnessed, with the most painful emotions, the effects, immediate and remote, of extravagant and unwarrantable promises in such cases.

The belief which still prevails to no inconsiderable extent, and which is the inheritance of a darker age,—the belief that medicine is an *occult* science ; that medical skill comes in some unknown or undefinable way—that it runs in the blood, or is a gift of nature or heaven—that it is a possession rather than an acquisition—has exerted a most powerful influence on the progress of quackery. We know that this belief will not often be acknowledged, but it is real and influential notwithstanding, as proved by the conduct and practice of men. It cannot be expected, of course, that those who suppose disease to be cured by the exercise of a magical influence, or by tricks of legerdemain, will have a very large share of that salutary incredulity in reference to extravagant pretension and secret skill, which is the safety of the sick man. And when men cannot protect themselves, whether by means of ignorance, or prejudice, or passion, or superstition, or even obstinacy, it is the duty of government to become their protector.

We do not mean to say that quackery *never* effects cures. We know that it is sometimes successful ; but we also know that those who practice it deserve little credit for such success. There is an influence exerted on the mind by the imposing process of a mountebank, particularly in the case of nervous and susceptible persons or those given to superstition—an influence of which both patient and prescriber are probably ignorant—which is all-powerful in curing certain kinds of disease. Hope, expectation, confidence, or even the more violent emotions, such as anger, terror, astonishment, have cured many a case of sickness, when recovery has been attributed to some worthless medicine, or to the magical skill of a juggler. Besides, empirics sometimes employ powerful remedies, of real value in their place, which, being prescribed for every form of disease, must infallibly produce relief in some, according to the laws of mere chance. It is well known that arsenic and corrosive sublimate are frequent ingredients in the “vegetable” compounds and specifics of quacks. The real cures effected by empirics, or by medicines used in an empirical manner, suggest the case of a militia-man, who, “being armed and equipped as the law directs,” is endeavoring, blindfold, to drive a bullet through some certain object within reach of a musket shot, but in an unknown direction. He blazes away most valorously, and at every point of the compass ; and after having riddled and shivered almost every thing about him, he of necessity finally hits his mark, according to the laws of chance. But does this fact prove him a marksman ? Or is it best, from such an instance of blundering success, to blazon his name abroad as one prodigiously skilled in shooting ? And yet, such a course is much like that which is often taken with regard to the random successes of empirics, or those ignorant of the nature and situation of disease, &c. And the declaration of a man who always shoots with his eyes shut, that he never misses his mark, and never yet killed the wrong game, is worth just as much as the common

boast of the charlatan that he never fails to cure, that his means are perfectly safe, and that he has in no instance lost a patient.

The want of a test, then, of easy application, by which medical qualifications can be determined by the public, the secrecy and deception with regard to the means employed, which are in the prescriber's power, the generally unknown nature of the remedies he uses, even though their names be known, the debilitating effects of disease and anxiety on the mind of the sick man, and, consequently, the great temptations and opportunities afforded to unprincipled and unqualified men to enter upon the business of medical imposture ;— all these things, and the evils which flow from them, furnish so many reasons why the appointed guardians of the public safety should inquire into the qualifications of medical men, and attach some specific penalty to the practice of fraud and deception. That a government has a right, and, in fact, is *obliged* to do this, cannot be questioned ; indeed, it is for this very purpose, and others like it, that a government exists.

The principle for which we would here contend is simply this— *That it is the right and duty of government to protect the people in every possible way against any trade, or craft, or profession, in which the public has peculiar interest, and the temptations to defraud and deceive are great.* This principle is recognized on almost every page of our statute-book. In accordance with it, millers are forbidden to take but a certain amount of toll. No person can sell certain kinds of goods at auction without a license. “No person shall set up or carry on the trade or mystery of tanning leather, except he prove his skill therein,” “and obtain a license therefor,” under a penalty of sixty seven dollars.* Why? Because the tanning of leather requires skill, and because leather is an article in which extensive fraud is practicable. No man can ship beef, fish, flour, onions, hay, shingles, &c., to a foreign market, unless they have been inspected and approved. Beef for exportation must be, at least, two years old, cut and cured in a certain manner, &c. These inconveniences (restrictions on personal rights, if you please,) must be submitted to, to prevent imposition, and to secure a good character and market abroad.

In accordance with this same principle, it has been farther enacted that “no person shall keep a district school, until he has been examined and approved by the visitors of the school society,” and shall receive a certificate of his qualifications for a teacher. Why? Because the business of school-teaching requires some knowledge, and because evils would be the consequence of committing it to incompetent men. Neither shall any person practice as an attorney, unless he be approved, admitted and sworn “agreeably to the rules established” by the court, unless it be in his own case ; “nor shall more than one attorney be allowed to plead on the same side of any cause,”

* Revised Statutes.

with certain exceptions; "and in no case, shall more than two attorneys be admitted to plead, on the same side." All these embarrassments the friends of "free trade" and "equal rights" must submit to, because the public good, (always a higher object than individual good,) requires some such measures to prevent the evils of protracted litigation, and the imposition of unqualified and designing men.

The whole license system recognizes and exemplifies the principle under consideration—that the free exercise of certain vocations by all, without restraint or condition, is not consistent with the highest general good. Inn-keepers are required to obtain a license, give a bond for the observance of the laws, conform to certain regulations regarding the selling of liquors and the preservation of morals, &c.

All these restraints on the business of society and of individuals—constraints similar to those enacted by every civilized government on earth—sufficiently prove the truth and justice of the principle we have been considering; or, at least, show that it is recognized and acted upon continually in our statute-book, which fact is all that is required for our present purpose. Therefore, in order to show the propriety of legislative interference in regard to the practice of physic, it only remains for us to prove that the medical art is *similar* in its nature, and in its relations to society, to other arts and occupations which, it is agreed, are proper subjects of legislation—a thing which, in fact, has already been done. If we mistake not, we have shown that the medical art, in its relation to the public welfare, holds a very high rank in importance, certainly as high as the art of the school-master or tanner. We have shown, too, that medicine is a difficult and comprehensive study, requiring natural talent, and a long period of diligent training, in such as would practice it successfully, and is not surpassed in these respects by any art or profession whatever, whether it be pleading, or tanning, or school keeping. Furthermore, we have shown that the business of a physician offers very great advantages for imposition to artful, incompetent and irresponsible men, certainly as great as the advantages of the attorney, the pedagogue, the auctioneer, the taverner, or the tanner. Are we not right, then, when we contend that the present medical laws ought not to be repealed, that ignorant and unqualified men ought not to practice physic, and that the guards and barriers which the public now have against imposture ought not to be removed?

Certainly, no fault can be found with the medical laws in this state on the score of their severity. They are the mildest possible, consistent with *any* legislative restrictions. They say to the medical student—you shall study, at least, two years, be examined as to your qualifications, receive a certificate of your competency, &c. Are these terms hard? Can a man of ordinary capacity acquire an adequate knowledge of our profession in less time? or can any better way be devised to secure this knowledge? If so, let that better way be adopted. If the necessary qualifications can be better determined than by a committee of experienced medical examiners, why, let

another mode of proving competency be tried. We are not so strenuous about the *form* of the thing as the thing itself.

But how far are the laws relating to our profession really exclusive or oppressive in their operation, and what is the penalty attached to their neglect? They do not prevent the freest competition, and all the benefits which flow from it; or a supply of licensed physicians at all times equal, at least, to the demand. They do not point out to the people the person they shall employ when they are sick. They allow all the utmost freedom of choice. A man who is ill, or even *not* ill, can employ a "regular doctor," or a "botanic doctor," or an "Indian doctor," or a doctress, one or more, until his means are exhausted and no one has business to interfere. He can swallow calomel, or lobelia, or tansy tea, or "doctor Brandreth's pills," or nothing, as best suits his fancy. He can have the fullest benefit of that peculiar wonder-working skill which comes from inheritance, or purchase, or inspiration, or inoculation, or which is the possession of root-doctors, patent-doctors, cancer-doctors, &c., and which a man whose knowledge is derived from observation and study can, of course, never learn. Nor does the law prohibit the man (or woman,) who has this skill from using it to the utmost advantage, either of himself or the world. He is not liable to a prosecution for *improving* his faculty, like the unlicensed attorney, or tanner, or auctioneer.

But the unlicensed practitioner cannot collect his fees! True, he cannot *by law*; or rather, he cannot *enforce* payment. This is the penalty, and the whole penalty, for neglecting to qualify himself for his business, and submit to an examination relative to his attainments.

No inconsiderable part of the beneficial effects of the present medical laws is derived from the sanction and authority which they give to just and healthful sentiments on an important subject. They may be considered as the expression of an opinion, by wise and influential men, that an intelligent, learned and faithful medical faculty should be sought, and encouraged, and trusted—an opinion, having no slight weight with the community at large. They virtually say—We, the enactors, representatives of the people, being impressed with the importance of an able and skillful body of physicians, and the necessity of education and a diligent course of training preparatory to the successful exercise of the medical art, do enact, &c. We need not say that the repeal of the medical laws, under present circumstances, would have the effect to throw the whole weight of legislative authority into the opposite scale. Such repeal would, virtually, be an expression of the opinion that medicine is not a science, and is not learned by observation and study; that the art of curing diseases may be something akin to a *knack* or "*gist*"; that the ignorance and stupidity of a man afford no ground for distrusting his competency and skill as a "doctor;" and that mountebanks and knaves, and all that genus, are just as likely to be skillful and trusty physicians, as men of science, learning and honor, and therefore ought not to be discouraged.

We now come to a topic we would gladly enough avoid, could we do it without having our motives misinterpreted. It has hitherto been our policy not to take notice, as a body, of particular forms of quackery occurring *without* the profession, unless we have been distinctly called upon to do so, as in the present instance. It has always been one of the primary objects of empiricism, whatever its shape, to provoke the profession to take an attitude of open hostility against it—an attitude which our notions of self respect, as well as our interest, would lead us to avoid. There is no cry with which the public sympathize so warmly, or which will go so far in making an insignificant man a prodigy, as the well-founded cry of persecution. The meanest pygmy who can make the world think that the world is conspiring to crush him, suddenly swells to the dignity and stature of a giant.—But we return to our more proper subject.

It is well known that the petitions for the repeal of that section of the medical laws which says that the irregular practitioner shall not collect his fees *by law*, have been got up and principally signed by the friends of what purports to be a new system of medicine, called the “Thomsonian system”—a system (we call it so by way of courtesy,) until lately not much known in this state. It is supposed that if this repeal can be effected, the “new system” will receive a great benefit. It now becomes our duty (not a pleasant one) to give some account of this system.

Samuel Thomson, who claims to be its founder, was born in New Hampshire in 1769.* He claims to have discovered his “emetic weed” (*lobelia*) when he was four years old. He was brought up to hard work upon a farm. At eight years of age, he seems to have taken his first lessons in medicine of an old woman who lived in the neighborhood of his father’s, who was skilled in the use of “roots and herbs,” and who, he affirms, cured him of canker-rash. He appears to have had no education, not even such as is the privilege of the most destitute now-a-days in New England. He early became dissatisfied with the “regular doctors,” and, consequently, began to prescribe for himself, and subsequently for his neighbors and friends. In 1805, his practice had become so extensive that he found it impossible to attend to his farm, and as he “had always a very strong aversion to working on a farm,” “the reason of which he could not account for,” [his own words,] he finally, after “having maturely weighed the matter,” “concluded to make use of that gift [his own words again] which I thought nature, or the God of nature, had implanted in me; and if I possessed such a gift, I had no need of learning, for no one can learn that gift.”—And he immediately “thought of what St. Paul says concerning the different gifts by the same spirit; one had the gift of prophecy; another, the gift of healing; another, the working of miracles.” After these reflections, he con-

* Our facts are all taken from his *Narrative of his own Life, and New Guide to Health*, written by himself, and edited by ABNER KNEELAND.

cluded to consecrate his life to the exercise of his "gift in healing the sick," (his favorite mode of expression.) Since that period, he appears to have seen much hard and various service, and has spent his time in Portsmouth, Boston, Maine, and other parts of New England. Most of the latter part of his life seems to have been occupied in forming botanical societies, selling his "family rights," (the right of using his patent for families,) establishing agencies, and quarrelling with his agents, who, by his own account, (doubtless a true one,) have taken every opportunity to defraud him and usurp his honors. His chosen confidants and associates seem, in almost all instances, to have turned out plunderers and knaves! What a comment on the integrity of his followers!! One Horton Howard, an agent for the Western country, sold in three and a half years eighty thousand dollars worth of rights! In order to get a settlement with him, Thomson was obliged "to sacrifice about seven eighths of what should have been coming to me" (him)!

Thomson appears never to have studied medicine at all, in any of its branches. All his discoveries he claims to have fished up from the depths of his own understanding; though his knowledge of disease and of remedies, (such as it is,) has evidently been picked up among the grandmothers and nurses of our country—those living repositories of traditional medical lore, for whom we entertain, of course, a most profound respect. Though very clearly a man of considerable shrewdness, and for aught we know, mainly honest in his intentions, he gives proofs of the most perfect ignorance of what we call medical science. He shows himself entirely unacquainted even with botany, about which his followers make such a flourish. When applying for his first patent in 1813, he was obliged to go to Dr. Mitchell for the botanical names of the plants he used. As it regards anatomy, physiology, pathology, chemistry, &c., they are not even mentioned in his book, except so far as they are understood or mis-understood by matrons and nurses. He says not one word from which we may infer that he ever saw the interior of a man. He professes great success in surgery and midwifery, as well as physic, notwithstanding.

What may be called *Doctor Thomson's theory, invented by himself*, (we call him *doctor* to show that we are willing to share the honor of the title with any body who claims it,) seems to be a mutilated copy of a very ancient one, originally the property of one Hippocrates, (who lived some three thousand years ago,) the remains of which are still to be traced among the medical wiseacres of our land—those skilled in traditional medical knowledge. It had its birth, of course, before the dawn of accurate science. We give the gist of the theory, as discovered by Dr. Thomson, in his own words.

"I found, after maturely considering the subject, that all animal bodies are formed of the four elements, earth, air, fire and water. Earth and water constitute the solids, and air and fire, or heat, are the cause of life and motion. That cold, or lessening the power of

heat, is the cause of all disease ; that to restore heat to its natural state was the only way in which health could be produced ; that the constitutions of all mankind being essentially the same, and differing only in the different temperament of the same materials of which they are composed ; it appeared clearly to my mind, that all disease proceeded from one general cause, and might be cured by one general remedy ; that a state of perfect health arises from a due balance or temperature of the four elements ; but if it is by any means destroyed, the body is more or less disordered. And when this is the case, there is always an actual diminution or absence of the element of fire or heat ; and in proportion to this diminution or absence, the body is affected by its opposite, which is cold. And I found that all the disorders which the human family were afflicted with, however various the symptoms, and different the names by which they are called, arise directly from obstructed perspiration, which is always caused by cold, or want of heat ; for if there is a natural heat, it is impossible but there must be a natural perspiration."

All this, or rather the original of all this, (for the *copy* is mutilated and imperfect,) is ingenious enough, when it is considered as the product of pure reflection, without the aid of observation and experiment, or the lights of modern science, (and it should be so considered in the case of Hippocrates, the author;) but what are we to say of such wretched stuff, put forth, at this day, as true and original doctrine ? "I found," says Dr. Thomson, and "I found," he repeats ; but how did he find what he describes ? why, by "maturely considering the subject!" And is this the way to analyze a man's frame ? Why did he not first look into the human body, and then tell us what it is made of, instead of staring on its outside, and afterwards "maturely considering" its composition ? Really, we feel that we are consenting to an act of humiliation in exposing such obvious absurdity—such nonsense, thrice distilled. To tell the truth, we feel ashamed of ourselves, ashamed of our common nature, and ashamed even of our country, that circumstances, aye, that *public opinion*, should require of us this exposure. What school boy does not know that neither of the above named elements are elements, with the exception of heat ? Earth consists of more than sixty elements ; air, of at least three, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbonic acid gas ; and water of two, oxygen and hydrogen.

"Cold," the doctor continues, "is the cause of all disease"—for instance, fever, itch, small pox, the inflammation which follows a *scald*, salivation from calomel, and, we suppose, broken bones and pregnancy, for we have noticed that Thomsonians steam for both ! But if cold is such an enemy to life, how happens it that people should live in Lapland, or why should they die under the equator ? But the doctor himself says, in another place, that bad food is a cause of disease, and in another that filth is a cause, and in a hundred other places, that sickness is produced by the "regular doctors !" On one occasion, he estimates that nine tenths of all the sickness of

our country is caused by calomel, opium, antimony and the lancet !* Can it be necessary to say more of Thomson's *theory* ?

Thomson's principal remedies are the following. We prefix the numbers and names by which they are known.—No. 1. Lobelia. No. 2. Capsicum, or red pepper. No. 3. The bark of the root of the bayberry, and the inner bark of the hemlock tree. No. 4. A spirituous infusion of bitter herb, (balmony,) barberry bark and poplar bark. No. 5. A decoction of poplar bark, bayberry and peach meats, or cherry stone meats, with sugar, &c. No. 6. High wines, myrrh, cayenne, and sometimes spirits of turpentine. *Composition powder.* Bayberry, hemlock, ginger, cayenne, and cloves. *Nerve powder.* The root of the lady's slipper.

These medicines, together with the use of steam, are embraced in Dr. Thomson's patent. All of them, or nearly all, have been used in medical or domestic practice for a very long time, certainly before Thomson was born. Even the lobelia, which he claims as peculiarly his own, has been known, in its more obvious properties, ever since the settlement of this country. It is a very active medicine, even dangerous when indiscreetly used, but has valuable properties in its place. It has been occasionally employed by regular physicians for more than half a century. Capsicum, too, is a valuable remedy in certain cases, and has been a favorite medicine with some physicians for more than a century ; though, (it is unnecessary to say,) it is not a specific. As for the other articles, it is sufficient to mention them in a general way. They are none of them of very much value as medicines ; though all have been employed by physicians or nurses for a long period, some of them time out of mind.

Thomson and his followers have much to say about there being vegetables enough in every country to cure the diseases incident to its climate. When asserting this, they probably forgot that capsicum, of which they make constant use, is not a native of New England, or even of the United States. For some very queer reasons, Thomson even condemns that which is cultivated at the south. Myrrh and cloves, too, grow no nearer us than Arabia and the East Indies, and ginger as far off at least, as Mexico. Of the eight compounds which Thomson has patented, four of them (Nos. 2, 5, and

* The Thomsonians profess to use only vegetable remedies, and denounce all *minerals* as poisonous. They seem not to be aware that many minerals constitute a necessary part of our nutriment. Common salt is a mineral—of course “poisonous.” This “poison” however is a necessary ingredient in the fluids of the animal system. Lime, magnesia, sulphur, and other minerals, are constituent parts of animal bodies, and every drop of blood is found to contain iron. The principal portion of bones—that on which their strength depends—is a mineral. What a frightfully “poisonous” composition is the human system! Had the wisdom of Thomsonians been employed in the creation of man, surely he would have been formed of purer and more harmless elements.

The shell of an egg is principally of mineral composition, and a fowl confined entirely to a vegetable diet lays an egg without any shell. We mention this fact to illustrate the benefits of a pure “Botanic” diet.

6, and "composition powder") *always*, and two others (Nos. 3 and 4,) *occasionally*, contain articles of foreign growth!

It is mentioned, too, by the botanic faculty, as an insurmountable objection to the regular physicians, that they conceal their knowledge and deceive their patients by the use of hard, jaw-breaking names. But what are we to say of the patent doctors, who are so afraid of names of any kind, because they sometimes betray secrets, that they designate their medicines by numbers and arbitrary terms invented for the purpose, whose signification it is impossible to ascertain, except by the purchase of a "right," or by accident, as in the case of ourselves. The technical terms used by physicians are the received terms of science, whose meaning may be learned by any one ignorant of it, by looking into such books as are to be found in the hands of every medical man, and in every book-store. Such terms are a lock to which every one has, or may have, the key; whereas, numbers are a lock to which there is no key, except to the initiated, or purchaser of a right. Here, again, we feel that the duty of exposing such pitiful objections is a degrading one; but it has been imposed upon us by authority which we could not disregard. A hundred other objections, like those already noticed, we might examine—but we forbear.

We shall allude but to one other topic. Much odium has been cast on our profession by fixing on it an unpopular name. It has been urged, sometimes with great vehemence, that our medical laws ought to be repealed, because they make the practice of physic a *monopoly*. This, possibly, may be brought forward as a reason, (a poor one enough, as we have already shown,) by those who are not themselves engaged in a monopoly; but how can the friends of the botanic system, (as it is fondly called,) plead thus, when that same system is the most perfect monopoly in the world. No man has liberty to employ Thomson's medicines, in the manner described in his patent, without purchasing a "right!" Let a person's disease or suffering be what it may, let him be in the agony of death even, and a sympathizing friend cannot so much as prepare and administer a single grain of Thomson's No. 1, without exposing himself to a prosecution. Should Doctor Thomson himself be sent for in such a case, he would not give a single particle of medicine, (such has been his course for many years, as declared in his "Narrative,") unless a right, costing twenty dollars, should forthwith be purchased. Was there ever so unwarrantable a use made of law?* If Thomson's system possess but a tithe of the value which his advocates claim for it, he is beyond all comparison the greatest monopolist in the land. He holds in his fist a power which it is not easy to esti-

* We have before adverted to the fact stated by Dr. Thomson, that one of his agents for the Western country, realized eighty thousand dollars for his sales in three and a half years. During the same period the rights sold by other agents named by him, produced an enormous amount. Yet his disciples ask for legislation against medical monopolies!

mate, and which should never be entrusted to any one man in this republican country. He has a certain patent mode of curing all diseases, of removing every pain and infirmity ; but no one can derive any benefit from it, either for himself or his friends, should his poverty or his principles forbid his paying twenty dollars for a patent! Let those who talk so much of "equal rights" ponder this matter.

A botanical doctor's monopoly is founded entirely on purchase. His patent right is his license. Secure in the exclusive possession of this, and intrenched by laws which operate as though made expressly for his benefit, he laughs at competition, and bids defiance to the world. He needs no study, no science, no knowledge, no sense, nothing but ample means of purchase, and he is a member of Dr. Thomson's "Friendly Botanic Society"—one of a privileged class—and can threaten with the terrors of a prosecution all such as attempt to use lobelia, red pepper and steam, in the manner that he does.

If our profession, then, under the present laws, is a monopoly, Thomsonism is a much greater one. The laws, in the first case, may be considered as reading thus—No man who shall practice physic, without having previously studied at least two years, been examined as to his qualifications, and received a certificate of his competency, shall be allowed to collect his fees by process of law. In the second case, they may be regarded as reading thus—No person shall practice as a botanic doctor, unless he shall have previously purchased a right of Dr. Thomson, under the pains and penalties of a prosecution before the United States court. As the present movement in regard to the repeal of the medical laws is made avowedly for the benefit of the steam fraternity, we would ask the question whether the friends of this movement would not find their account in dwelling no more on the odiousness of monopolies?

For the reasons which have been given in the foregoing pages, we cannot but hope that the legislators of this highly enlightened state will weigh well the matter, before giving their solemn sanction to what we, in our hearts, conceive to be a great system of imposture. We cannot but look on the present endeavor to procure a repeal of the existing medical laws, as an attempt to break down and disgrace the regular medical faculty ; to bring learning and science into discredit; and to build up on the ruins thereof a set of idle and irresponsible men—adventurers in the great business of medical imposture—who, as a body, have no one of the numerous qualifications which we conceive to be necessary to a skillful and trusty physician. We have no doubt that this attempt, even though it attain its immediate object, will prove abortive in its ultimate aim. We know that this enlightened community will never countenance quackery as a general and permanent thing ; but, at the same time, we have good reason to believe that many honest men will be perplexed, many minds unhinged, and individual opinion in hundreds of cases unsettled, should the present excitement against medicine as a science, and in favor of medicine as a "gift," be encouraged.

